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SUBJECT Wages, Goods, and Services in Tbilisi

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WAGES, GOODS AND SERVICES IN TBILISI

1. Although wage standards and salaries in Georgia were similar or identical to standards throughout the rest of the USSR, the Georgian people seemed to live much better than those in other sections of the country /Encls. A and B/. I attribute this largely to four factors:
 - a. The nature of the people themselves and their spirit of cooperation. In other sections of the USSR every person was out for himself; the Georgians tried to help one another as much as they could, not only within the family but between friends. Where a man and his wife were both working, life was not too difficult; but if there were children in the family and the wife was unable to work, life could be more difficult. In such cases, those in more comfortable circumstances helped the others through their difficulties.
 - b. Another contributing factor was that many people were able to supplement their salaries with outside income. For example, one of my friends wove silk as a pastime, which proved to be rather profitable. There seemed to be a number of such possibilities.
 - c. Another factor in the better living standards was that apparently the authorities were less severe with the workers on the kolkhozy. Each had his own garden plot and farm animals and was able to dispose of the produce on the free market without much interference from the authorities. There had not been the periodic waves of seizures by the authorities in Georgia of such produce and land as had been reported in other sections of the USSR; in the entire post-war period there was little known of such activities. The result of all this was that there were many more goods available to the Georgians, which naturally improved their standard of living.

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- d. One more contributing factor in this region was that the workers on the sovkhosy lived much better than those I heard of in other sections of the country. Being in a sub-tropical region, there was a specialization on crops which give a relatively high return, such as tea, grapes, and citrus and other fruits. More of these products found their way to the Georgian markets than would be the case elsewhere, although they were not always readily available, of course.

All of this added up to a picture of relatively good living conditions in Georgia as compared to the rest of the country.

2. Ordinary workers in Georgia worked an eight-hour day, six days a week. Coal mines worked three shifts a day, and construction on hydro-electric stations usually was on a two-shift basis. But the ordinary^{50X1} standard was one shift a day. I myself worked about 12 hours a day, and six or even seven days a week. [redacted] of leave a year, [redacted]
3. In the case of sickness, workers and salaried people received full salaries while incapacitated, usually for up to two months, or up to three or four months in special cases. If they were incapacitated for a longer period than that, they were usually put on a pension. However, workers had to have been employed for three to six months to be entitled to this benefit, after which they could receive half of it; after a full year, workers were entitled to the full benefit. I felt that labor-turnover was not so much of a problem in Georgia as in other sections of the country.
4. Housing conditions were quite bad. I knew of many instances in which seven or eight people were living in one room. Maintenance and repair were practically non-existent, and it usually took a bribe to get any work of this sort done. New housing construction was inadequate for the needs of the population.
5. Minimum wages for the simplest type of work in Tbilisi were about 600-700 rubles per month, but 1,000 rubles was the usual average for workers. Coal miners, however, were in a very favored position, for some of them earned up to 2,500 rubles per month. Construction workers earned somewhat less than that, perhaps 2,000 rubles or so. From these wages and salaries it was usual for persons to subscribe two weeks of their incomes annually for State Loans. Workers had no insurance to pay, this fee being paid by the employers. Average income taxes amounted to 10% or so, with the percentage increasing or decreasing as income varied from the average; I base this on my own highest salary (1948-1950) which was slightly above the average, 1,300 rubles per month.
6. As my wife was also working and earned a salary of 1,500 rubles per month, we were able to live quite comfortably. I estimate that it cost us about 30 rubles a day for food, which included meat every day and butter as we needed it, as well as other such items. The two of us shared a two-room, 50 sq. m. apartment with [redacted]^{50X1} This included a living room, a glassed in terrace of 20 sq. m., and a kitchen. There was no bath. For this we paid a rent of 40 rubles per month. [redacted] I was considering renting another room for ourselves. In addition to the basic rent, I paid 25-30 rubles per month for electricity, but this included that used for cooking as well, since the stove was electric. Water cost 1½-2 rubles per month per person, and heating cost 15 rubles per month per room.
7. Clothing was expensive in Tbilisi, being four or five times more expensive than in Western Germany. However, the quality was equal to that in Germany; in fact, linens were of higher quality. Shoes were expensive, but of good quality. Dry cleaning facilities were available

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at a cost of 30 rubles per suit, with a wait of two or three days. There were no laundries, however, since the Georgians preferred to do their own work. My wife used to hire a woman to do the laundry. I want to emphasize however, that our relatively good living standard was possible only because we had no children and my wife was able to supplement the family income with her own salary.

8. Tbilisi had a number of movie houses and theaters. I estimate that there were 10 large movie houses, as well as countless smaller ones and movies at numerous clubs. Prices for tickets ranged from three to five rubles. Of the several theaters, there were two in the Georgian language, one in Russian, one in Azerbaijani, and one Jewish. Prices for these were 5 - 12 rubles. In addition there were two children's theaters, one in Georgian and one in Russian, and a marionette theater. There was an opera house where operas and ballet were presented. The usual practice with the opera was that there would be one or two guest stars from Moscow, but the basic company was from Tbilisi. (The city maintained its own ballet company.) Tickets were up to 20 rubles at this house. There was also a theater for presentation of operettas and light operas. Finally, Tbilisi had a circus during the winter months which cost up to 15 rubles a performance. In addition there were a number of small club theaters.
9. Tbilisi had about seven or eight large restaurants with quite good kitchens. The Georgians were famous for their food. There were any number of smaller restaurants and cafes in Tbilisi.
10. It was quite a common practice to entertain and visit friends in Georgia, Georgians being known as a hospitable people.

Annexes:

- A. Cost of Living Reference Sheet, Tbilisi, Georgian SSR
- B. Budget in Rubles for an Average Family in Georgian SSR (1952)

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Annex A. Cost of Living Reference Sheet, Tbilisi, Georgian SSR

FOODSTUFFSSTATE STORES
(prices in rubles)FREE MARKET
(prices in rubles)

Black bread, kilo	1.70	2.5
White bread, kilo	3.	Not sold
Milk, liter	2.50	3.5
Eggs, dozen	10.	12-18.
Butter, kilo	25.	30-35.
Vegetable oil, liter	10-20.	20-30.
Cheese, kilo	10-25.	20-35.
Sugar, kilo	11-50.	Not sold
Beef, filet, kilo	15.	30.
Beef, 2nd choice, kilo	12.	25.
Beef, other cuts, kilo	5-10.	10.
Mutton, 1st grade, kilo	18.	25.
Pork, 1st grade, kilo	20.	30.
Veal, 1st grade, kilo	18.	30.
Chicken, dressed, kilo	30.	45.
Fresh salmon or carp, kilo	12.	Not sold
Fish, 2nd grade, kilo	3- 8.	Not sold
Carrots, kilo	2.	2.
Potatoes, kilo	1.	3.
Rice, kilo	13.	15-20.
White beans, kilo	7.	7.
Apples, kilo	3- 7.	5- 8.
Oranges, each	3- 5.	3- 5.
Dried fruit, kilo	8-30.	10-15.
Salt, kilo	1.20	Not sold

LUXURY FOODS

Black caviar, kilo	80.	60.
Smoked salmon, kilo	40.	40.
Vodka, 40 degrees, liter	45.	25.
Wine, 85 centiliters	8-12.	7.
"Cognac," Soviet, 85 cl.	75.	Not sold
"Champagne," Soviet, bot.	30.	Not sold
Milk chocolate, kilo	75.	Not sold
Coffee, ground, kilo	40.	Not sold
Tea, 1st grade, kilo	80.	Not sold

CLOTHING

Rayon, meter	20-30.	Not sold
Wool, medium grade, meter	170.	"
Cotton, mercerized, meter	8-15.	"
Cotton socks, pair	5.	"
Rayon stockings, good, pr.	20-40.	"
Man's wool suit	550-1400.	"
Cotton dress	40-50.	"
Man's leather jacket	800.	"
Leather shoes	120-400.	"
Felt boots for winter	110.	"
Handbag, artificial leather	30-120.	"
Woman's felt hat	90.	"
Man's felt hat	80.	"

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Annex A (Cont'd)

MANUFACTURED PRODUCTSSTATE STORES
(prices in rubles)FREE MARKET
(prices in rubles)

Man's bicycle
 Baby-carriage
 Aluminum saucepan
 Milk can
 Knife and fork, metal
 Cup and saucer
 Upright piano
 Electric refrigerator

675.

12-30.

12-25.

7- 8.

6.

4000.

3000.

Not sold

"

"

"

"

"

"

"

AUTOMOBILES

Small car
 Medium car (like Ford)
 Large luxury car (copy
 of 1946 Packard, carriage
 work finished by hand)

7500. (Moskvitch) Mileage 70,000-80,000km.

16000. (Pobeda) Mileage 100,000-130,000 km.

27000. (ZIM) Mileage 100,000-130,000 km.

Housing: 1.20 per sq. m. for the first 10 sq. m. for one person
 3.50 for each additional sq. m.

Fuel: coal - 110 per tn.
 firewood - 40 per cu. m.
 kerosene - 1.10 per lit.

Heating: 15 for each room

Taxes: 10% of income or more
 taxes for a married person without children: 6% of income
 taxes for a married person with one child: 3% of income
 taxes for a married person with two children: .5% of income

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Annex B: Budget in Rubles for an Average Family in Georgian SSR (1952)

		TOTAL FAMILY INCOME		
		Unskilled Industrial Workers	Skilled Workers or Technicians	Engineers, Higher Gov't Officials, Doctors, etc.
		12,000	18,000	30,000
1	2	3	4	5
1.	Food	6,400	9,320	13,300
2.	Clothing and footwear	1,500	2,000	3,000
3.	Apartment	200	300	500
4.	Furniture	200	300	500
5.	Electricity and heating	400	400	400
6.	Community utility services	50	50	50
7.	Personal care and services	500	700	1,000
8.	Newspapers	-	60	200
9.	Entertainment	300	500	500
10.	Transportation costs	360	400	500
11.	Taxes: Income Tax (podokhodnyy)	600	1,500	3,000
	Bachelor's tax	60	90	150
	State loan	1,000	1,500	3,000
	Other taxes	120	180	600
12.	Children's education expenses (textbooks, paper, pencils, music teacher)	210	700	800
13.	Vacation costs	-	-	2,000
12"	Sport and hobbies	-	-	500
TOTAL		12,000	18,000	30,000

Note: The sample budgets are made for three income groups living in Tbilisi or any other larger town in Georgian SSR. Each family consists of husband, wife, and two children under 17 years of age; both parents work; none are Party members (Party fee on a 1,200 rubles monthly income was around 70 rubles, which amounted to almost seven percent), and all families described would be assigned government apartments.

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